

The Unwholesome Mental States & Their Cessation

Buddhism always points out the way how to get rid of suffering and how to achieve real happiness. As much as a person practices Buddhism, he or she is on the way of increasing happiness and decreasing suffering. If someone is on this path honestly, he is on the path of liberation. The Dhamma that the Buddha explained has six main qualities. The Dhamma is well expounded (*Svākkhāto*), directly visible (*Sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*Akāliko*), calling one to come and see (*Ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*Opanaiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*Paccattam Veditabbo Viññuhi*). To achieve final bliss of liberation, we have to listen to the Buddha's message with good attention for our knowledge, and we have to reflect on that knowledge through our life. Also, we have to practice it in our day to day life as much as we can.

The happiness or misery and the success or failure in our life completely depend on the nature of our mind. That's why Buddhism says; **Mind is the forerunner of all states, mind is the chief, mind made are they. If someone speaks or acts with an impure (wicked) mind, suffering follows him even as the wheel follows the hoof the draught ox.** Also, if someone speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him, even as the shadow never leaves him. In this situation, Buddhism always pays attention to purify one's mind which is the main advice of Buddhism (*Sacittapariyo dapanam*)

The main reason that we suffer is unwholesome thoughts such as greed, jealousy, anger, ill will, lamentation, lust and ignorance. Also, if we are happy, our mind fills with wholesome thoughts such as generosity, loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, tranquility and wisdom. In this situation, the way to get rid of suffering is reducing unwholesome thoughts. And the way to achieve happiness is increasing wholesome thoughts.

According to Buddhism all unwholesome thoughts can be divided into three. They are;

1. Craving, Greed or Lust (*Lobha/ Raga*)
2. Anger or Ill will (*Dosa / Patigha*)
3. Delusion or Ignorance (*Moha / Avijjā*)

These are the main defilements which disturb our peace of mind. If we have more unwholesome emotions, it means we have more suffering. If we have less defilements, it means we have less suffering. If somebody needs to live with more happiness, he has to reduce these defilements. Desire means the attachment, lust, craving or greed. Anger means conflict or ill will. Delusion means unknowing of the world reality or ignorance of the impermanence.

Our success in the path of liberation depends on how far we have reduced these three unwholesome thoughts. We can see two levels on the path of reducing defilements. First level is the surface level. It is a temporary solution. The second level is deep level. It is the ultimate and

permanent solution. In the second level, our vision is completely changed into the correct way that helps to eradicate defilements completely.

By listening to the Buddha's teaching, we gradually go forward on the path of liberation. In the first level of reducing defilements, we can practice generosity to reduce desire. When we are ready to donate something to others concerning their qualities or needs, our mind is free from desire. Then greed in mind gradually decreases. Further when we practice loving kindness for all people in the world, anger also decreases little by little. We mostly lose our inner peace because of anger. Also, people mostly suffer because of anger. Practicing loving kindness helps us to reduce anger and ill will. That is why the Buddha has recommended practicing loving kindness at the very beginning on the path of liberation. As the result of practicing loving kindness, we begin to see all beings as our only child. Then most of our conflicts with people cease. This attitude about other beings is the highest in the spiritual development. Practicing loving kindness is one of the signs that we are on the path of liberation from suffering (or dissatisfaction). Meanwhile Buddhism recommend five precepts which is the moral conduct we have to practice for the wellbeing of ourselves and other people. The five precepts are;

1. Abstaining from killing beings (*Pānātipātāveramani sikkhāpadam*)
2. Abstaining from stealing (*Adinnādānāveramani sikkhāpadam*)
3. Abstaining from sexual misconduct (*Kāmesumiccācārāveramani sikkhāpadam*)
4. Abstaining from false speech (*Musāvādāveramin sikkhāpadam*)
5. Abstaining from intoxicating drinks and drugs (*Surāmerayamajjapamādattānāveramin sikkhāpadam*)

He who practices these five precepts, can see a lot of benefits and refuges in this immediate life itself. He has an assurance and protection in this world. That's why these five precepts are highly recommended in Buddhism. He who follows these precepts gives fearlessness and loving kindness (non-hatred) to the society. Also, he can live without fear and anger because of this good discipline in behavioral and verbal moral conduct.

With the understanding of the Karmic Law, practicing above path can be included into three meritorious deeds. They are;

1. Generosity – Sharing something with others who are respectful & needed in (*Dāna*)
2. Virtue – Practicing five precepts (*Sila*)
3. Meditation – Practicing loving kindness (*Bhāvanā*)

As the result of following above path, we are able to overcome five hindrances. They are;

1. Sensual pleasure – *Kāmcchanda*
2. Ill will - *Vyāpāda*
3. Sloth and Torpor - *Thinamiddha*
4. Restlessness and Scruples - *Uddhacca Kukkucca*
5. Skeptical Doubt - *Vicikicchā*

The final solution Buddhism recommends is to reduce all the defilements is reducing ignorance which is the sixth hindrance what the Buddha taught. Ignorance or delusion is the main cause of all the defilements. According to Buddhism, a person's real spiritual success completely depends on how far he has eradicated his ignorance. In another way, how much he has developed his wisdom which is the opposite of ignorance. When ignorance reduces correctly, other defilements like craving and anger gradually cease.

To decrease delusion, we should be knowledgeable about the world and ourselves. The Karmic law which means what we have done in our past lives and we do in this life effects our future lives as well as this life. The Karmic law is a big shadow which acts behind us. If we have this knowledge about the karmic law, our patience increases when problems come to our life and, the knowledge that everything is impermanent also helps. The experience that we receive through our senses arises and ceases at the moment. If we have this understanding, we are able to live equally in sufferable or pleasurable situations.

In the second level, we go deeper to reduce defilements permanently. Here, knowledge, reflection and practice are very important. We have attachment and anger because of the unknowing of the experience. The nature of all our experience is instant. The experience that we receive with our senses arises and ceases at the moment according to conditions. When conditions are together, the experiences as forms, sounds, smell, taste, touch, metal formations arise at the moment. The experience doesn't come to the present from the past. And it doesn't go to the future from the present. **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) would not come to (the future) occurrence.** (අනුන්වා සම්භවං හුන්වා න භවිස්සති). When conditions separate, the experience ceases without anything remaining. This is the reality that we experience every moment. However, because of our ignorance we think that the experience remains after experiencing. We live in the ceased experience as soon as we think of something. This is the main cause of suffering. If we have this knowledge about the cause of suffering, we reflect on it again and again in our daily life. And also we try to eradicate defilements permanently by practicing the path leading to the cessation from suffering. To be permanent of this reality we should practice three disciplines the Buddha has kindly advised. They are;

1. Virtue (*Sila*)
2. Tranquility (*Samādhi*)
3. Wisdom (*Paññā*)

With the clear knowledge of the cessation of suffering, we form self-discipline in our speech and behavior. Before we act or speak something, we reflect on it again and again whether it is good or bad, right or wrong, whether it is useful in this life and here after. As much as we have this discipline in our behavior, we have no mistakes. We can remember our life with pleasant mind because of our good behavior. This discipline in our behavior and speech helps us to go forward in the path of purification practicing meditation purifying our mind. Virtue or moral conduct is the foundation of the spiritual path. Therefore the Buddha has mostly pointed out the importance of

practicing virtue. Discipline in senses is also very important and useful for a successful moral life. Because of virtuous life we are honored in the society where we live in.

In purification of the mind, we mainly use two meditation techniques which are tranquility (or concentration) and insight. In the tranquility meditation, we keep our mind with a particular good thought. As a result of concentrated mind, we can live for a long time without suffering and stress, but it is not permanent and it can be changed. Here we practice and develop our awareness especially in mind and body. We practice to do all kinds of activities mindfully. Mindfulness is one of the most important qualities that we have to develop for purification of our mind. Also mindfulness helps us to keep our mind in the present moment. The nature of our mind is going to the past and future without awareness. By practicing tranquility meditation, we train our mind to live in the present moment with mindfulness. And when mind goes to the past or future we are aware of it. There are forty techniques in Buddhism to develop mindfulness. When we practice those techniques with right understanding, we don't lose concentration. We go forward seeing world reality which is impermanence.

Concentration is not enough to eradicate defilements completely. That is why Buddhism advises us to develop another step that is insight meditation for permanent happiness. Here, with the concentrated mind, we reflect on all kinds of things that mental and physical on three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). They are;

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| i. | Impermanence | (<i>Anicca</i>) | - අනිත්‍ය |
| ii. | Dissatisfaction | (<i>Dukkha</i>) | - දුක්ඛ |
| iii. | Selflessness | (<i>Anatta</i>) | - අනාත්ම |

We reflect again and again on these three characteristics of existence (*Tilakkhana*- ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). As a result of practicing this world reality, we develop wisdom with the knowledge of impermanence. Simultaneously, we develop five qualities which are confidence (*Saddhā*-සද්ධා), effort (*Viriya*-වීරිය), mindfulness (*Sati*-සති), concentration (*Samādhi*-සමාධි) and wisdom (*Paññā*-පඤ්ඤා). As the result of practicing The Noble Eightfold Path with mindfulness and wisdom, we gradually reach real happiness decreasing defilements. Final experience of this is living in the present moment with full awareness seeing arising and ceasing without any desirable attachment anger. It means we have overcome dissatisfaction and suffering. As soon as we get any experience in our senses, we are able to see them as impermanent. We understand that it was not there before the experience, and also nothing remaining after the experience. Every moment of our experience arises when conditions are together, and the experience ceases when conditions separate. This is the ultimate truth that we have to realize for the ultimate goal that is the liberation, Nibbāna.

This is the path that leads to reduce three defilements. As the result of practicing the three disciplines, we gradually decrease unwholesome thoughts and achieve real happiness. This is the real success in our life because it helps us to live in the noble bliss of liberation.

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